

Korea's Senate list now probbers' guide

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file

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WASHINGTON—In investigating the Korean influence-buying operation the Senate ethics committee is using a master list of senators whom the Korean government targeted for payoffs, Sen. Stevenson has told The Tribune.

Senators named on the list are being asked to produce checks, bank records, lists of campaign contributions, and other documents, Stevenson said. While refusing to say how many senators are involved, the Illinois Democrat indicated that the number is small.

Stevenson said that as early as 1970 U.S. intelligence agencies obtained detailed plans of who would receive the payoffs and how the operation would work from sources inside the Korean government.

STEVENSON also disclosed that the Senate intelligence committee is investigating why the White House and Justice Department failed to warn senators and congressmen targeted by the Koreans after receiving information on the operation from U.S. intelligence agencies.

Stevenson is chairman of the ethics committee and the second-ranking Democrat on the intelligence committee.

Some Nixon administration officials—notably former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird—have indicated that information about the Korean payoff scheme reached them well before millionaire businessman Tongsun Park, Ambassador Kim Dong Jo, and other Koreans began spreading cash and gifts around Capitol Hill.

MANY POWERFUL congressmen and a few senators, unaware that Korea was conducting an influence-buying operation, allowed their names to be associated with Tongsun Park.

Rep. Thomas "Tip" O'Neill (D., Mass.), House Speaker, allowed Park to throw lavish parties in his honor at Park's exclusive Georgetown Club. The House majority whip, John Brademas (D., Ind.) accepted cash gifts from Park and reported them as campaign contributions.

At least 10 congressmen wrote letters to the Korean government praising Park and assuring President Park Chung Hee of their continued support of U.S. aid to Korea.

REP. BRUCE CAPUTO (R., N.Y.), a member of the House ethics committee, said secret testimony by Park disclosed that "dozens" of House members accepted gifts of varying size. Other sources put the number at 24.

Three House members have described efforts by Korea's former ambassador to the U.S. to give them envelopes stuffed with \$100 bills.

The House ethics committee has produced documents indicating operatives of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA) funneled several million dollars into the payoff operation during the early '70s.

KCIA officials who later defected said that Park's operation was code-named "Ice Mountain," while Ambassador Kim's operation was called "White Snow."

STEVENSON SAID the Senate intelligence committee—which has access to even highly classified CIA files, unlike other congressional committees—began investigating the CIA and other U.S. intelligence agencies when the Korean payoffs were disclosed.

A subcommittee headed by Stevenson then obtained secret CIA files showing the agency knew as early as 1970—through its "counterespionage" arm—substantial details and names of those involved in Korean plans for the payoff scheme.

Stevenson would not discuss the committee's progress in its investigation. He said publicity surrounding the House committee probe has hampered its effectiveness.

Stevenson said that his committee is pressuring for testimony from several Korean nationals besides Park, but he would not identify them. However, it is generally known that Ambassador Kim Dong Jo, former Ambassador Hahn Pyong Choon, and former KCIA director Lee Nu Rak had key roles in the Korean operation.

"WE WILL CONSIDER that someone is giving us cooperation only if we believe what he tells us," Stevenson said. Unless they cooperate, Stevenson is prepared to block a \$1 billion request by Korea for a nuclear reactor.

Leon Jaworski, special prosecutor for the House ethics committee, and others have threatened to seek a cutoff of aid to Korea unless the Korean government makes these key men available for questioning.

Sources close to the House investigation said the committee has learned that Park was supposed to concentrate on House members in the payoff scheme, while the Korean ambassadors were to work on senators.

A HOUSE SOURCE said the Senate effort focused on making cash contributions to election campaigns. Federal law prohibits senators from accepting cash contributions from foreign government agents and requires that all contributions since 1972 are to be reported. But the law has a three-year statute of limitations.

Stevenson confirmed that Senate investigators are trying to determine whether members who received campaign contributions from the Koreans reported them properly.

Stevenson said he is seeking testimony from others besides Park because otherwise the public will not believe the Senate conducted a thorough investigation of its members.

"The public has become very cynical [about the Korean scandal]," Stevenson said. "Whatever we conclude, we must make it believable. The most difficult situation will be to make people believe it if we find members innocent."